

1 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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 3 IN RE: POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS :  
 4 OF 18 USC 2511 & 2512 :  
 5 - - - - -x

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6 Grand Jury Room No. 3  
 7 United States District Courthouse  
 8 3rd & Constitution Avenue, N. W.  
 9 Washington, D. C.

10 Tuesday, February 12, 1974

11 The testimony of RONALD ZIEGLER was presented to a  
 12 full quorum of the Grand Jury.

13 BEFORE:

14 RICHARD BEN-VENISTE, ESQ.  
 15 Assistant Special Prosecutor  
 U. S. Department of Justice

16 JILL VOLNER  
 Assistant Special Prosecutor  
 U. S. Department of Justice

17 GERALD GOLDMAN, ESQ.  
 18 Assistant Special Prosecutor  
 U. S. Department of Justice

19 GEORGE T. FRAMPTON, JR., ESQ.  
 20 Assistant Special Prosecutor  
 U. S. Department of Justice  
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1 recall that?

2 A Yes, I can.

3 Q That was on the 23rd. Do you recall making a state-  
4 ment personally to the press on the 26th indicating that the  
5 President had called Mr. Dean to discuss the Los Angeles Times  
6 story with him?

7 A I recall making the statement on the 26th, yes.

8 Q What statement do you recall making?

9 A I recall making a statement on the 26th that the  
10 President had confidence in Mr. Dean.

11 Q Did you make that statement as well?

12 A Yes, I did. I made the statement. The President  
13 didn't. I made the statement.

14 Q Do you recall the statement being the President has  
15 complete confidence in Mr. Dean?

16 A Yes, I do.

17 Q Do you recall further stating that the President  
18 wanted you, Mr. Ziegler, to express his absolute and total  
19 confidence in Mr. Dean?

20 A Yes, I do.

21 Q And did you discuss that with the President prior to  
22 making it?

23 A Yes, I did.

24 Q And what do you recall your discussion being?

25 A I recall, primarily, that we were having some problems

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1 with the -- I'm recalling this conversation -- with the pri-  
2 soners of war, at that point, and the major part of my con-  
3 versation with the President related to the prisoner of war  
4 problem.

5 During the course of that conversation, I briefly  
6 raised the point of the McCord letter and I was told to ex-  
7 press confidence in Mr. Dean and I did.

8 BY MR. GOLDMAN:

9 Q Was anyone present?

10 A Mr. Haldeman was present.

11 BY MR. BEN-VENISTE:

12 Q Well, did Mr. Haldeman anything?

13 A I don't remember specifically what Mr. Haldeman said,  
14 or specifically what the President said, but I do remember  
15 that the discussion along the lines that we've talked about.

16 We were talking about the North Vietnamese had had  
17 a problem or it caused a problem in relation to POW's.

18 Q Did the President tell you he had spoken to Mr.  
19 Dean that morning?

20 A No, and I subsequently had cleared that up in a  
21 press briefing. I surmized or embellished, in that particular  
22 press conference, that it was my understanding that he had.

23 Q Where did you get that?

24 A Just an assumption that I drew.

25 Q That he'd spoken to him that morning?

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1 A Yes, that is correct.

2 Q And who told you he hadn't?

3 A Well, later on, the story broke that Mr. Dean -- that  
4 the President had not spoken to Mr. Dean that day at Camp  
5 David and I checked and publicly stated that, indeed, Haldeman  
6 had talked to Mr. Dean on that occasion, and I so stated in  
7 the briefing.

8 Q So it wasn't until the press story came out that  
9 you corrected your error?

10 A That's right. It wasn't really until the press  
11 statement came out that I realized my assumption was incorrect.

12 Q No one from the White House corrected you?

13 A No, they did not.

14 Q After the statement was made?

15 A Because that did not, as I remember, play that domi-  
16 nant part in the story.

17 Q Well, for any reason, no one corrected you?

18 A No, they did not.

19 Q No one corrected you in terms of expressing the  
20 President's completely and absolute total confidence in Mr.  
21 Dean?

22 A No. And I must say that the embellishment in the  
23 statement itself was partially mine. I was not given the  
24 precise language from the President.

25 Q Generally, you better vouch for Mr. Dean as far as

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1 we're concerned, then?

2 A No. It was express confidence in John --

3 Q Express confidence.

4 A That's right.

5 Q And that's the way you did it?

6 A That's right.

7 Q And it didn't strike you as an unusual way to do  
8 it at the time, I take it?

9 A No, it didn't, because I had confidence in John  
10 Dean.

11 Q Now, did the President or anyone else ever explain  
12 to you why he made that statement in view of what the Presi-  
13 dent had been told by John Dean as of the 21st?

14 A No, they did not.

15 Q Did you ever ask?

16 A No.

17 Q Do you have any understanding?

18 A I can only give you my understanding in my mind on  
19 supposition.

20 Q What is that?

21 A Could I do that?

22 Q What is it?

23 A Well, my impression, during that period, is that the  
24 President was trying to -- this is not based on what I knew  
25 then, but it's based on what I've been able, in my own mind,

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